

SPIRITUALITY IN ACTION

What's going on throughout the Areas of the American Association of the Order of Malta

August 2016

INSPIRATION FROM THE AREAS AND THE ORDER OF MALTA WORLDWIDE:

On July 27, the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations sponsored a prayer service for peace in the Middle East at Holy Family Parish, which is known as the United Nations parish because of its close proximity.

The event, hosted by Cardinal Timothy Dolan of the Archdiocese of New York along with Bishop Gregory Mansour of the Eparchy of St. Maron in Brooklyn, honored Patriarch Béchara Peter Cardinal Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.



"In an area whose turmoil often causes us to wring our hands in frustration, we admire you, one who holds his hands together in prayer, whose hands are raised in blessing, whose hands are often held out to stop bullets, bombs, and bloodshed, and whose arms embrace all," Cardinal Dolan said in his address to the Patriarch.

In Cardinal Rai's address, he said the absence of Christians in the Middle East, or the weakening of their cultural influence, would impoverish both Christians and Muslims, as it harms the culture of dialogue and coexistence desperately needed in the world today, if one is to promote multiculturalism as a viable way of life. "Christianity was born in the Middle East. We are entrusted with the safeguarding of that tradition. Christianity is within our hands, to try to keep that treasure alive," Cardinal Rai said.

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS CAMPAIGN
FOR PEACE IN SYRIA**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today I want to speak to you about something that saddens my heart a lot: the war in Syria, now in its fifth year. It is a situation of unspeakable suffering that the Syrian people are victims of, forced to survive under bombs or to find escape routes to other countries or areas of Syria that are less war-torn: to leave their own home, everything... I also think about the Christian communities, which I give my full support to for the discrimination they have to bear.

So I want to turn to all the faithful and those that are committed, with Caritas, to the construction of a more just society. While the people suffer, incredible quantities of money are being spent to supply weapons to fighters. And some of the countries supplying these arms are also among those that talk of peace. How can you believe in someone who caresses you with the right hand and strikes you with the left hand?

I encourage all, adults and young people, to live the Holy Year of Mercy enthusiastically to overcome indifference and proclaim with strength that peace in Syria is possible! Peace in Syria is possible!

For this, we are called to embody this Word of God: *"I know the plans that I have for you,"* declares the Lord. *"They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope."* (Jeremiah, 29,11)

The invitation is to pray for peace in Syria and for its people at prayer vigils, at awareness-raising initiatives in groups, parishes and in communities, to spread the message of peace, a message of unity and hope.

Works of peace then follow prayer. I invite you to call on those who are involved in peace negotiations to take these agreements seriously and to make every effort to facilitate access to humanitarian aid.

Everyone has to recognise that there is no military solution for Syria, but only a political solution. The international community must therefore support the peace talks heading towards the construction of a government of national unity.

Let's join forces, at all levels, to ensure that peace in beloved Syria is possible. Now that really will be a great example of mercy and love lived for the good of all the international community!

May the Lord bless you and may Mary Most Holy protect you.

Thank you.

The following two articles are reprinted with gracious permission from Malteser International

Pope Francis Received the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta in Audience

Pope Francis received in audience the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta Fra' Matthew Festing on June 23, 2016 for the feast day of St. John the Baptist, the Order of Malta's patron saint, celebrated on 24 June.



The drama of the refugees and 65 million displaced persons was one of the key topics of the meeting. "You do good," said Pope Francis while awarding the Grand Master a medal depicting Saint Martin giving half of his cloak to the poor, and copies of "Evangelii gaudium", the "Laudato sii" and "Amoris laetitia". In exchange, Fra' Matthew Festing gave Pope

Francis a silver medal depicting the hospital of the Order in Jerusalem in the eleventh century, which symbolises the Order of Malta's assistance to the sick and the pilgrims during this jubilee year, as well.

The Grand Master illustrated the Order's most important projects in place in Africa, the Middle East and in Europe to assist those forced to flee from wars, violence and oppressive regimes. With its network of some 100,000 volunteers, its associations, embassies, volunteer and rescue corps, the Order of Malta has stepped up its work with displaced persons in recent years. It has concentrated its efforts in the countries from which these people are fleeing – or are about to do so – as well as along the main migration routes and in the countries of arrival. A commitment that is spelt out in healthcare, psychological support and integration projects.

Present in 120 countries, the Order of Malta runs humanitarian programmes in countries involved in the most recent conflicts, such as Syria and Iraq where it is currently assisting some 80,000 people. Nor



does it forget the silent wars which, out of the media limelight, are claiming victims in many other parts of the world, such as in South Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Order of Malta's humanitarian commitment goes hand in hand with its diplomatic activity. In the recent World Humanitarian Summit of Istanbul (23-24 May) the Order helped to highlight the added value of faith-based organizations in war zones. At the end of the audience – held every year between the Grand Master and the Pope – the delegation led by Fra' Matthew Festing was received by the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

World Refugee Day: An Overview of the Order's Action Across the World

With 60 million people on the move, we are witnessing the highest number of displaced persons in decades. Spawned by armed conflicts in the Middle East, North and Central Africa and South Asia, hundreds of thousands of people have attempted the journey to Europe either by crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey or the Mediterranean from Libya. Only in the first six months of the year it is estimated that some 2,000 people have drowned trying to reach Italy.

The surge of asylum-seekers in Europe is the greatest wave of refugees to the continent since the end of World War II. Suffering, abuse and exploitation, particularly for children and women, and the loss of life in the desert or at sea, are the dramatic consequences. In such an alarming scenario, the Sovereign Order of Malta has strengthened its action so to address the mounting demand of humanitarian aid and provide relief to the millions of people taking perilous routes in search of a better life. Its worldwide network of associations, embassies, relief and volunteer corps rooted in 120 countries have scaled up- or in some cases newly introduced- assistance projects based on the local and geographical needs. Although the projects for refugees and displaced people focus primarily on the **Middle East**, the Order's action also covers a diverse array of other regions, such as **the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda and Ukraine.**

Here are just a few examples:

Lebanon: Working with different confessions to help refugees

From the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011 until the end of 2016, around 14,500 families – mostly Syrian and Iraqi refugees as well as needy host community – have been and will receive medical care, food and hygiene kits. Since 2014 a Mobile Medical Unit operates in Wadi Khaled-Akkar area, in North Lebanon at the Syrian border and on request of the government a similar operation has been implemented in the Bekaa area, where 35% of the refugee population live.

The first Mobile Medical Unit in Lebanon was launched by the Order of Malta in 1996, during the “Operation Grapes of Wrath” and was implemented with the collaboration of the Shia humanitarian organization “Imam Sadr Foundation”, with whom the Order of Malta also runs a medical center in the village of Siddikine, near Tyre. As a result, the Order signed an official agreement with the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council of Lebanon. In the same spectrum, the Order also cooperates with the highest Druze authority, providing medical support to their Foundation and has a very special relationship with the highest Sunni authority in the country, Dar Al Fatwa.

Malteser International: supporting refugees where the need is most

In collaboration with local partners, Malteser International, the Order of Malta’s worldwide relief agency, provides humanitarian aid for refugees and displaced people in the north of **Syria and Iraq, Turkey, and Lebanon**. In 2015, its field hospitals, medical centers, and mobile clinics provided medical care to almost **170,000** sick and wounded people. In total, aid reached more than **266,000** refugees, displaced people, and vulnerable local inhabitants in the Middle East.

In **DR Congo** at the beginning of May 2016, Malteser International began a project to improve health and hygiene services for 21,000 refugees and vulnerable locals by delivering medication, financing the purchase of medical equipment, training medical staff, and constructing sanitary facilities at health centers. In **South Sudan**, Malteser International has been distributing essential food aid to internally-displaced people in the city of Wau and has recently introduced a cash voucher system. In **Uganda**, home to around 270,000 refugees from South Sudan, Malteser International works to provide aid to the refugees living in Rhino Camp. Since 1993, Malteser International has been engaged in a wide-ranging project to support the health of **Myanmar** refugees – primarily members of ethnic minorities and other groups subject to discrimination– living in refugee camps in **Thailand**, as well as locals in the nearby villages. The conflict in eastern **Ukraine** was reported to have displaced around 1.6 million people by the beginning of 2016. Since May 2015, Malteser International has been working to provide psychosocial help to displaced people and to strengthen local support structures in their host regions. **In 2015**, psychosocial support was provided by the Order to 4,000 people displaced by the Ukraine conflict

Italy: specialized rescue at sea provided in the Mediterranean

The Italian Relief Corps of the Order of Malta has been actively present with teams of doctors, nurses and rescuers, on the island of Lampedusa since 2008, to provide round the clock first aid to the migrants attempting to cross the sea in improvised and overcrowded boats. Overall, 55,000 people have been rescued at sea and treated by the medical teams of the Order of Malta. In December 2015, in the wake of the dramatic influx of migrants and refugees trying to reach the Greek islands from the Turkish coasts, the Italian Relief Corps of the Order of Malta launched the

Aegean SAR Operation (Search and Rescue). During the three-month mission, the doctors and nurses of the Order of Malta saved 2,000 people.

Germany: 25 years of experience in assisting and integrating migrants and refugees

The first facilities for migrants and refugees in Germany were established more than 25 years ago. Today the Order of Malta in Germany is responsible for 140 facilities on behalf of the federal counties and municipalities with space for more than 44.000 refugees. A staff of about 2.400 people and almost 800 volunteers keep those facilities running. In 2015 one migrant out of three was supported by the Order of Malta. This year a new service called “integration pilot” has been introduced to address specific needs of migrants with disabilities.

Austria: focusing on integrating migrants

Across the country – from Vienna to Linz, from Salzburg to Innsbruck – many projects are run by the Order of Malta to facilitate the integration into the local communities of migrants and refugees. Welcome services and medical assistance are provided at the Vienna Westbahnhof (railway station) in cooperation with the Red Cross, the Austrian Samaritan Organization, the municipal rescue service of the City of Vienna and the St. John Ambulance. Across the country, many shelters offer accommodation and Emergency overnight accommodation. In Styria, language courses as well as leisure activities are organized.

Hungary: the Order of Malta at the border with Serbia providing health care

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta is currently providing humanitarian aid to the migrants and refugees trying to enter Hungary at the entry points along the Serbian border. Families with small children are getting priority with the help of the Office of Immigration and Nationality. Staff of the Order of Malta regularly provide health care assistance and distribute medicines such as painkillers and antifebriles, as well as food and drink to the people in need. In the event of an increase in number of people arriving, the Order of Malta is well equipped and prepared to step up its service.

Slovakia, helping refugees in the most affected countries

The Order of Malta in Slovakia has delivered aid to a refugee camp in Alexandria – in Greece, as a result of the official cooperation between Malteser Aid Slovakia and the Slovak Medicine University of St. Elizabeth. Amongst aid provided are professional hospital beds, interior equipment for the field hospital, hygienic and medical equipment.

For more information on how Christians are faring worldwide, please click on the links

<http://gulfnews.com/news/mena/egypt/mob-stabs-christian-to-death-in-egypt-over-feud-1.1864449>

<http://abc7ny.com/news/2-attackers-slay-priest-in-normandy-church-are-shot-dead/1443133/>



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